



## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Mary Cordula Wekenborg

On June 14, 1932, the second of five children was born to Cordula (Venneman) and John Wekenborg in St. Louis. She was baptized five days later at St. Aloysius Church and named Rosemary Ann. An older brother, two younger brothers and a sister completed the family.

At the age of 5, Rosemary began her education at St. Aloysius School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). The family lived across the street from St. Aloysius Convent. Rosemary would help the sisters in the sacristy, do their shopping and she spent many evenings with them. She experienced them as happy and cheerful persons. During these years, her parents wanted the children to take music. The girls took piano lessons and the boys took violin lessons.

After graduating from eighth grade, Rosemary attended Rosati-Kain High School. During her senior year, she would visit the chapel daily and ask Our Lady to show her God's plans for her and to give her the grace to cooperate. One day in November, the co-principal, Sister Cyprian Marquart, asked her if she would like to go to Sancta Maria in Ripa. When Rosemary told the family, there were tears of joy. Rosemary's mother had two sisters in the SSND community, Sisters Mary Lawrence and Mary Cornelius Venneman. Rosemary visited Sancta Maria in Ripa, met Mother Evangela Wagner and registered for the candidature.

Rosemary entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa on August 31, 1950. The following April, she was able to surprise her parents for their 25th wedding anniversary by playing piano at the Mass for them. Years later, she would also play the piano for their 50th wedding anniversary, as well as their funeral Masses. As a second year candidate, she was missioned to Blessed Sacrament, Hannibal, Missouri, to teach third and fourth grades, and to be the musician for the parish. She was received into the novitiate on July 29, 1952, and given the name Mary Cordula, in honor of her mother. She professed first vows on July 31, 1953 and final vows on July 31, 1959.

Following profession, she taught at St. Martin of Tours, Lemay, Missouri, for several months and then was sent to St. Joseph, Manchester, Missouri, as there was need for a musician. She was then missioned to Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Louis. In 1956, Sister Cordula began 16 years of ministry in California as teacher and musician at Santa Isabel, Los Angeles; St. Hilary, Pico Rivera; and Holy Family, Linda Vista. At Linda Vista, she was principal and superior. In 1966, she earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. Leaving California was a sad day for her.

Sister Cordula's next mission was St. Mary's Cathedral in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, as a full-time music teacher. After a week's initiation with Sister Rose Mary (Mary Ann) Linhoff, she learned enough to give instrumental lessons and conduct a band. Later, she formed a guitar group. She spent 10 years at this mission.

In 1982, she began 25 years of ministry at St. Anthony, Effingham, Illinois.

*continued*

**Birth**  
June 14, 1932

**Baptism**  
June 19, 1932

**Profession**  
July 31, 1953

**Death**  
December 22, 2021

**Burial**  
Sancta Maria in Ripa  
Cemetery, St. Louis

*Precious and blessed is  
the death of the faithful  
before God... for  
they die in union with  
their dear Jesus, in the  
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger  
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame  
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

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*Sister Mary Cordula  
Wekenborg*



She was a full-time classroom music teacher in the school, the band director and directed the parish adult choir. From a sizable donation from the estate of a former choir member, she was able to purchase hand bells. She taught 12 junior high students and formed a superb bell choir. The bell choir performed at special Masses, concerts, dinners and various community functions.

Sister Cordula came to Sancta Maria in Ripa in 2007, and she ministered in many community service projects, especially in the Resource Development Department, and in making sleeping mats out of plastic bags for the homeless. In 2012, she was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri.

In 2014, she was recognized by St. Andrew's Senior Services as one of the ageless remarkable St. Louisans. She accepted the 2016 Mercy Award from the Archdiocese of St. Louis on behalf of the Mat Makers Group at The Sarah Community. As her health failed, she was transferred to Anna House in March 2021. During her years at The Sarah Community, she played for the celebration of the liturgy in the chapel. She passed away unexpectedly in the morning of December 22, 2021.

A prayer service was held at The Sarah Community on December 28, 2021. The reading of her biography, sharing of memories and funeral Mass was celebrated on December 29, 2021, at Theresa Center chapel. Monsignor Enlow, the former pastor at St. Anthony in Effingham, Illinois, was the celebrant. Former choir members, friends and SSND were in attendance. Funeral services were live streamed for those who could not attend. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. A luncheon was served for guests in Theresa Center auditorium.

Sister Cordula is survived by her brother, Charles (Rose) Wekenborg of St. Louis, and her sister, Marydel (Ben) Brewer of Owensboro, Kentucky. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brothers, Robert and Paul.

An extremely gifted musician and excellent liturgist, Sister Cordula shared her talents with numerous individuals ranging from young children to adults. Her love of music was evident in the dedication and care with which she offered this gift to God's people. She was a joyful, hospitable and welcoming person to sisters in community and to members of the parishes where she ministered. She had a big heart for those who were in any need. In her retirement years, she was always willing to help wherever possible. May she now join the choirs of angels as she enters into her new life with her God whom she praised so frequently during her lifetime.

*By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND*

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